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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY
C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

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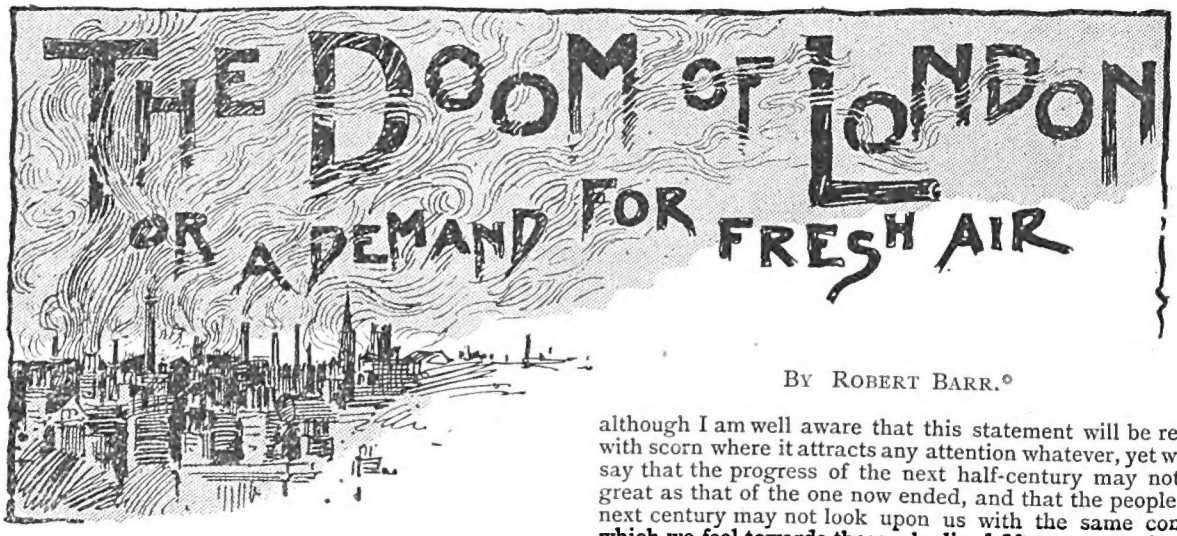
EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 338.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING JUNE 22, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.



By Robert Barr.*

I.—The Self-conceit of the Twentieth Century.

I trust I am thankful that my life has been spared until I have seen that most brilliant epoch of the world's history—the middle of the twentieth century. It would be useless for any man to disparage the vast achievements of the past fifty years, and if I venture to call attention to the fact, now apparently forgotten, that the people of the nineteenth century succeeded in accomplishing many notable things, it must not be imagined that I intend thereby to discount in any measure the marvellous inventions of the present age.

Men have always been somewhat prone to look with a certain condescension upon those who lived fifty or a hundred years before them. This seems to me the especial weakness of the present age; a feeling of national self-conceit, which, when it exists, should at least be kept as much in the background as possible.

It will astonish many to know that such also was a failing of the people of the nineteenth century. They imagined themselves living in an age of progress, and while I am not foolish enough to attempt to prove that they did anything really worth recording, yet it must be admitted by any unprejudiced man of research that their inventions were at least stepping-stones to those of to-day. Although the telephone and telegraph, and all other electrical appliances, are now to be found only in our national museums, or in the private collections of those few men who take any interest in the doings of the last century, nevertheless, the study of the now obsolete science of electricity led up to the recent discovery of vibratory ether, which does the work of the world so satisfactorily.

The people of the nineteenth century were not fools, and although I am well aware that this statement will be received with scorn where it attracts any attention whatever, yet who can say that the progress of the next half-century may not be as great as that of the one now ended, and that the people of the next century may not look upon us with the same contempt which we feel towards those who lived fifty years ago?

Being an old man, I am, perhaps, a laggard who dwells in the past rather than the present; still, it seems to me that such an article as that which appeared recently in *Blackwood* from the talented pen of Prof. Mowbray, of Oxford University, is utterly unjustifiable. Under the title of "Did the People of London Deserve their Fate?" he endeavours to show that the simultaneous blotting-out of millions of human beings was a beneficial event, the good results of which we still enjoy.

According to him, Londoners were so dull-witted and stupid, so incapable of improvement, so sodden in the vice of mere money-gathering, that nothing but their total extinction would have sufficed, and that, instead of being an appalling catastrophe, the doom of London was an unmixed blessing. In spite of the unanimous approval with which this article has been received by the press, I still maintain that such writing is uncalled for, and that there is something to be said for the London of the nineteenth century.

II.—Why London, Warned, was Unprepared.

The indignation I felt in first reading the article alluded to stills remains with me, and it has caused me to write these words, giving some account of what I must still regard, in spite of the sneers of the present age, as the most terrible disaster that ever overtook a portion of the human race.

I shall not endeavour to place before those who read any record of the achievements pertaining to the time in question. But I would like to say a few words about the alleged stupidity of the people of London in making no preparations for a disaster regarding which they had continual and ever-recurring warning. They have been compared with the inhabitants of Pompeii making merry at the foot of a volcano.

In the first place, fogs were so common in London, especially in winter, that no particular attention was paid to them. They were merely looked upon as inconvenient annoyances, interrupting traffic, and prejudicial to health, but I doubt if anyone thought it possible for a fog to become one vast smothering mattress pressed down upon a whole metropolis, extinguishing life as if the city suffered from hopeless hydrophobia.

* As most of my readers are probably aware, Mr. Robert Barr was kind enough to write an appeal on behalf of the cause of the Fresh Air Fund, a few weeks back, which appeared in *Pearson's Weekly*. At the same time he suggested that I might reprint this remarkable story which came out some little time ago in "The Face and the Mask," published by Hutchinson & Co., and, certainly, if it does not arouse the sympathy of those who read it, nothing will. Even now there remains time to do something towards improving the condition of the inhabitants of London, and what surer way than by exerting ourselves to brighten and gladden the lives of the little children who will some day be citizens themselves?

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I have read that victims bitten by mad dogs were formerly put out of their sufferings in that way, although I doubt much if such things were ever actually done, notwithstanding the charges of savage barbarity now made against the people of the nineteenth century.

Probably the inhabitants of Pompeii were so accustomed to the eruptions of Vesuvius that they gave no thought to the possibility of their city being destroyed by a storm of ashes and an overflow of lava. Rain frequently descended upon London, and if a rainfall continued long enough it would certainly have flooded the metropolis, but no precautions were taken against a flood from the clouds.

Why, then, should the people have been expected to prepare for a catastrophe from fog, such as there had never been any experience of in the world's history? The people of London were far from being the sluggish dolts present-day writers would have us believe.

III.—The Coincidence that Came At Last.

As fog has now been abolished both on sea and land, and as few of the present generation have even seen one, it may not be out of place to give a few lines on the subject of fogs in general, and the London fogs in particular, which through local peculiarities differed from all others. A fog was simply watery vapour rising from the marshy surface of the land or from the sea, or condensed into a cloud from the saturated atmosphere. In my day, fogs were a great danger at sea, for people then travelled by means of steamships that sailed upon the surface of the ocean.

Rain frequently descended upon London.

London at the end of the nineteenth century consumed vast quantities of a soft bituminous coal for the purpose of heating rooms and of preparing food. In the morning and during the day, clouds of black smoke were poured forth from thousands of chimneys. When a mass of white vapour arose in the night, these clouds of smoke fell upon the fog, pressing it down, filtering slowly through it, and adding to its density. The sun would have absorbed the fog but for the layer of smoke that lay thick above the vapour and prevented its rays reaching it. Once this condition of things prevailed, nothing could clear London but a breeze of wind from any direction. London frequently had a seven days' fog, but these two conditions never coincided until the last year of the last century. The coincidence, as everyone knows, meant death—death so wholesale that no war the earth has ever seen left such slaughter behind it. To understand the situation, one has only to imagine the fog taking the place of the ashes at Pompeii, and the coal smoke as being the lava that covered it. The result to the inhabitants in both cases was exactly the same.

IV.—The American who Wanted to Sell.

I was at the time confidential clerk to the house of Fulton, Brixton, & Co., a firm in Cannon Street dealing largely in chemicals and chemical apparatus. Fulton I never knew; he died long before my time. Sir John Brixton was my chief—knighted, I believe, for services to his party, or because he was an official in the City during some royal progress through it; I have forgotten which. My small room was next to his large one, and my chief duty was to see that no one had an interview with Sir John unless he was an important man or had important business. Sir John was a difficult man to see, and a difficult man to deal with when he was seen. He had little respect for most men's feelings, and none at all for mine. If I allowed a man to enter his room who should have been dealt with by one of the minor members of the company, Sir John made no effort to conceal his opinion of me.

One day, in the autumn of the last year of the century, an American was shown into my room. Nothing would do but he must have an interview with Sir John Brixton. I told him that it was impossible, as Sir John was extremely busy, but that if he explained his business to me I would lay it before Sir John at the first favourable opportunity. The American demurred at this, but finally accepted the inevitable. He was the inventor, he said, of a machine that would revolutionise life in London, and he wanted Fulton, Brixton, & Co. to become agents for it.

The machine, which he had in a small handbag with him, was of white metal, and it was so constructed that by turning an index it gave out more or less oxygen gas. The gas, I understood, was stored in the interior in liquid form under great pressure, and would last, if I remember rightly, for six months without re-charging. There was also a rubber tube with a mouthpiece attached to it, and the American said that if a man took a few whiffs a day he would experience beneficial results.

Now, I knew there was not the slightest use in showing the machine to Sir John, because we dealt in old-established British apparatus, and never in any of the new-fangled Yankee inventions. Besides, Sir John had a prejudice against Americans, and I felt sure this man would exasperate him, as he was a most cadaverous specimen of the race, with high nasal tones, and a most deplorable pronunciation, much given to phrases savouring of slang; and he exhibited a certain nervous familiarity of demeanour towards people to whom he was all but a complete stranger. It was impossible for me to allow such a man to enter the presence of Sir John Brixton, and, when he returned some days later, I explained to him, I hope with courtesy, that the head of the house regretted very much his inability to consider his proposal regarding the machine.

The ardour of the American seemed in no way dampened by this rebuff. He said I could not have explained the possibilities of the apparatus properly to Sir John; he characterised it as a great invention, and said it meant a fortune to whoever obtained the agency for it.

He hinted that other noted London houses were anxious to secure it, but for some reason not stated he preferred to deal with us. He left some printed pamphlets referring to the invention, and said he would call again.

V.—The American Sees Sir John.

Many a time I have since thought of that persistent American, and wondered whether he left London before the disaster, or was one of the unidentified thousands who were buried in unmarked graves. Little did Sir John think, when he expelled him with some asperity from his presence, that he was turning away an offer of life, and that the heated words he used were, in reality, a sentence of death upon himself.

For my own part, I regret that I lost my temper, and told the American his business methods did not commend themselves to me. Perhaps he did not feel the sting of this; indeed, I feel certain he did not, for, unknowingly, he saved my life. Be that as it may, he showed no resentment, but immediately asked me out to drink with him, an offer I was compelled to refuse.

But I am getting ahead of my story. Indeed, being

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unaccustomed to writing, it is difficult for me to set down events in their proper sequence. The American called upon me several times after I told him our house could not deal with him. He got into the habit of dropping in upon me unannounced, which I did not at all like, but I gave no instructions regarding his intrusions, because I had no idea of the extremes to which he was evidently prepared to go.

One day, as he sat near my desk reading a paper, I was temporarily called from the room. When I returned I thought he had gone, taking his machine with him, but a moment later I was shocked to hear his high nasal tones in Sir John's room alternating with the deep notes of my chief's voice, which apparently exercised no such dread upon the American as upon those who were more accustomed to them.

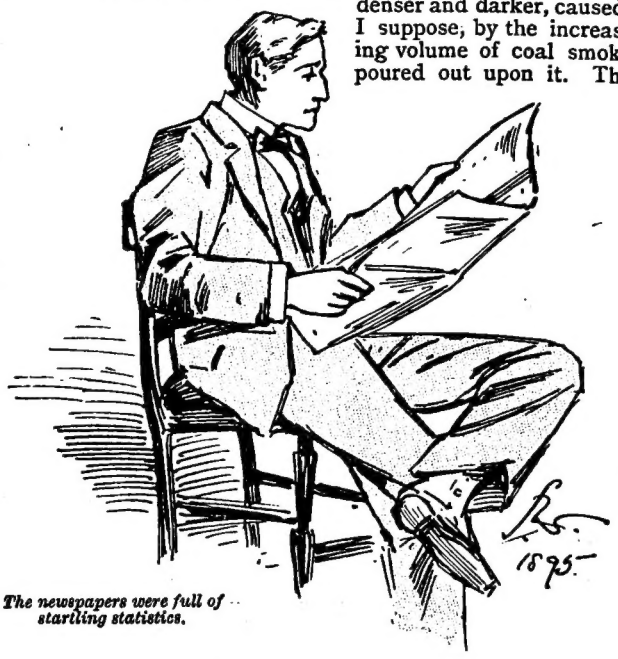
I at once entered the room, and was about to explain to Sir John that the American was there through no connivance of mine, when my chief asked me to be silent, and, turning to his visitor, requested him gruffly to proceed with his interesting narration. The inventor needed no second invitation, but went on with his glib talk, while Sir John's frown grew deeper, and his face became redder, under his fringe of white hair.

When the American had finished, Sir John roughly bade him begone and take his accursed machine with him. He said it was an insult for a person with one foot in the grave to bring a so-called health invention to a robust man who never had a day's illness. I do not know why he listened so long to the American, when he had made up his mind from the first not to deal with him, unless it was to punish me for inadvertently allowing a stranger to enter.

The interview distressed me exceedingly, as I stood there helpless, knowing Sir John was becoming more and more angry with every word the foreigner uttered, but, at last, I succeeded in drawing the inventor and his work into my own room and closing the door. I sincerely hoped that I would never see the American again, and my wish was gratified. He insisted on setting his machine going, and placing it on a shelf in my room. He asked me to slip it into Sir John's room some foggy day and note the effect. The man said he would call again, but he never did.

VI.—How the Smoke Held Down the Fog.

It was on a Friday that the fog came down upon us. The weather was very fine up to the middle of November that autumn. The fog did not seem to have anything unusual about it. I have seen many worse fogs than that appeared to be. As day followed day, however, the atmosphere became denser and darker, caused, I suppose, by the increasing volume of coal smoke poured out upon it. The



The newspapers were full of startling statistics.

Lying face downwards on the floor.

peculiarity about those seven days was the intense stillness of the air. We were, although we did not know it, under an air-proof canopy, and were slowly, but surely, exhausting the life-giving oxygen around us, and replacing it by poisonous carbonic acid gas.

Scientific men have since showed that a simple mathematical calculation might have told us exactly when the last atom of oxygen would have been consumed; but it is easy to be wise after the event. The body of the greatest mathematician in England was found in the Strand. He came that morning from Cambridge.

During a fog there was always a marked increase in the death-rate, and on this occasion the increase was no greater than usual until the sixth day. The newspapers on the morning of the seventh were full of startling statistics, but at the time of going to press the full significance of the alarming figures was not realised. The editorials of the morning papers on the seventh day contained no warning of the calamity that was so speedily to follow their appearance.

I lived then at Ealing, a western suburb of London, and came up every morning to Cannon Street by a certain train. I had up to the sixth day experienced no inconvenience from the fog, and this was largely due I am convinced, to the unnoticed operations of the American machine. On the fifth and sixth days Sir John did not come to the City, but he was in his office on the seventh. The door between his room and mine was closed.

Shortly after ten o'clock I heard a cry in his room, followed by a heavy fall. I opened the door, and saw Sir John lying face downwards on the floor. Hastening towards him, I felt for the first time the deadly effect of the deoxygenised atmosphere, and, before I reached him, I fell, first on one knee, and then headlong.

I realised that my senses were leaving me, and instinctively crawled back to my own room, where the oppression was at once lifted, and I stood again upon my feet, gasping. I closed the door of Sir John's room, thinking it filled with poisonous fumes, as, indeed, it was. I called loudly for help, but there was no answer. On opening the door to the main office, I met again what I thought was the noxious vapour. Speedily as I closed the door, I was impressed by the intense

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silence of the usually busy office, and saw that some of the clerks were motionless on the floor, and others sat with their heads on their desks as if asleep.

Even at this awful moment I did not realise that what I saw was common to all London, and not, as I imagined, a local disaster, caused by the breaking of some carboys in our cellar. (It was filled with chemicals of every kind, of whose properties I was ignorant, dealing as I did with the accountant, and not with the scientific side of the business.)

I opened the only window in my room, and again shouted for help. The street was silent and dark in the ominously still fog, and what now froze me with horror was meeting the same deadly, stifling atmosphere that was in the rooms. In falling I brought down the window and shut out the poisonous air.

Again I revived, and slowly the true state of things began to dawn upon me. I was in an oasis of oxygen. I at once surmised that the machine on my shelf was responsible for the existence of this oasis in a vast desert of deadly gas. I took down the American's machine, fearful in moving it that I might stop its working. Taking the mouthpiece between my lips I again entered Sir John's room, this time without feeling any ill effects.

My poor master was long beyond human help. There was evidently no one alive in the building except myself. Out in the street all was silent and dark. The gas was extinguished, but here and there in shops the incandescent lights was still weirdly burning, depending, as they did, on accumulators, and not on direct engine power.

I turned automatically towards Cannon Street Station, knowing my way to it even if blindfolded, stumbling over bodies prone on the pavement, and in crossing the street I ran against a motionless 'bus, spectral in the fog, with dead horses lying in front, and their reins dangling from the nerveless hand of a dead driver. The ghostlike passengers, equally silent, sat bolt upright or hung over the edge-boards in attitudes horribly grotesque.

VII.—The Train with its Trail of Dead.

If a man's reasoning faculties were alert at such a time (I confess mine were dormant), he would have known there could be no train at Cannon Street Station, for if there was not enough oxygen in the air to keep a man alive, or a gas-jet alight, there would certainly not be enough to enable an engine fire to burn, even if the engineer retained sufficient energy to attend to his task.

At times instinct is better than reason, and it proved so in this case. The railway in those days from Ealing came under the City in a deep tunnel. It would appear that in this underground passage the carbonic acid gas would first find a resting-place on account of its weight; but such was not the fact. I imagine that a current through the tunnel brought from the outlying districts a supply of comparatively pure air that, for some minutes after the general disaster, maintained human life.

Be this as it may, the long platforms of Cannon Street underground station presented a fearful spectacle. A train stood at the down platform. The electric lights burned fitfully. This platform was crowded with men, who fought each other like demons, apparently for no reason, because the train was already packed as full as it could hold. Hundreds were dead under foot, and every now and then a blast of foul air came along the tunnel, whereupon hundreds more would relax their grips, and succumb.

Over their bodies the survivors fought, with continually thinning ranks. It seemed to me that most of those in the standing train were dead. Sometimes a desperate body of fighters climbed over those lying in heaps, and, throwing open a carriage door, hauled out passengers already in, and took their places, gasping. Those in the train offered no resistance, and lay motionless where they were flung, or rolled helplessly under the wheels of the train. I made my way along the wall as well as I could to the engine, wondering why the train did not go. The engineer lay on the floor of his cab, and the fires were out.

Custom is a curious thing. The struggling mob, fighting wildly for places in the carriages, were so accustomed to trains arriving and departing that it apparently occurred to none of them that the engineer was human and subject to the same atmospheric conditions as themselves. I placed the mouthpiece between the purple lips, and, holding my own breath, like a submerged man, succeeded in reviving him.

He said that if I gave him the machine he would take out the train as far as the steam already in the boiler would carry it. I refused to do this, but stepped on to the engine with him, saying it would keep life in both of us until we got out into better air. In a surly manner he agreed to this, but he did not play fair.

Each time he refused to give up the machine until I was in a fainting condition with holding in my breath; and, finally, he felled me to the floor of the cab. I imagine that the machine rolled off the train as I fell and that he jumped after it. The remarkable thing is, that neither of us needed the machine, for I remember that just after we started I noticed through the open iron door that the engine fire suddenly became aglow again, although at the time I was in too great a state of bewilderment and horror to understand what it meant.

Across the Thames near Kew.

A western gale had sprung up—an hour too late.

Even before we left Cannon Street those who still survived were comparatively safe, for one hundred and sixty-seven persons were rescued from that fearful heap of dead on the platforms, although many died within a day or two after, and others never recovered their reason.

When I regained my senses after the blow dealt by the engineer, I found myself alone, and the train speeding across the Thames near Kew. I tried to stop the engine, but did not succeed. However, in experimenting, I managed to turn on the air brake, which in some degree checked the train and lessened the impact when the crash came at Richmond terminus.

I sprang off on the platform before the engine reached the terminal buffers, and saw passing me, like a nightmare, the ghastly train-load of the dead. Most of the doors were swinging open, and every compartment was jammed full, although, as I afterwards learnt, at each curve of the permanent way, or extra lurch of the train, bodies had fallen out all along the line.

The smash at Richmond made no difference to the passengers. Besides myself, only two persons were taken alive from the train, and one of these—his clothes torn from his back in the struggle—was sent to an asylum, where he was never able to tell who he was; neither, as far as I know, did anyone ever claim him.

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The Supreme Sacrifice

On the banks of the Orge, but a short distance from Belles-Fontaines, can be seen an elegant little château of modern construction, roofed with slate. Standing on the hill-side, in the midst of grassy lawns, and surrounded by low trees, the house attracts the attention of the few rowers who from time to time descend the Orgeto Juvisy. Occasionally a fisherman —in search of a good place to throw his hook—has perceived, on the heights above, a woman, her face covered with a thick veil, and a young man who walked slowly beside her, leaning on her arm. At the slightest sound of an oar, both disappeared round the bend of a path or behind a clump of shrubs. The people of Juvisy had vainly employed every effort to penetrate the mystery.

After having exhausted all imaginable suppositions, the innkeeper and the grocer of Juvisy had decided that the young man was a maniac, whom his family had imprisoned in that property, bounded by a high wall on the side towards the road, and by a river on that towards the fields. As for the woman, she was a relative, or a hireling, and when a painter, returning from Belles-Fontaines, asked who was the owner of that sheltered, mysterious-looking park, without the slightest hesitation they replied: "It is a madman who lives there."

. . . . . .

On July 10, 1884, during one of those periods of heat which Senegambia envies us, the Viscount de Montbrun left his small hotel in the Rue Varnet at nine in the morning, and walked down the Champs Elysées. M. de Montbrun was one of those Parisians who never leave Paris.

"The sea," said he, "was made for fishermen and sailors. It has its beauties, but it is agreeable only one hour each day. As soon as it begins to ebb, it uncovers a lot of pestilential mud, compared with which our great sewer is a bottle of cologne. As for the country, it is always just as hot there as in Paris, with this difference—you never know what to do with your evenings."

On all sides he saw carriages loaded with trunks. The preparations for the approaching 14th of July festivities saddened his heart, for the true Parisian is the inveterate enemy of public holidays and of all manifestations which disturb his repose.

"Where can I take refuge for three days?" thought M. de Montbrun. The year previous he had gone to St. Germain, and they had made just as much racket, and shot off quite as many bombs there as at Paris. Montbrun then remembered that he had promised himself an excursion into Brittany before the vandaliser had finished transforming that old corner of his country. To see again Vitré Fougères, pass a day at St. Malo, and then return, would be just the thing. He would thus avoid the crowd and noise.

On the morrow Montbrun arrived at Vitré. It was Saturday evening. In provincial towns, to fairly judge the collective beauty of their women, it is necessary to take one's post on Sunday at the door of a church. That is why Montbrun stood as early as eight in the morning before the splendid edifice dedicated to St. Martin, waiting for mass to be over.

Before leaving Paris he had thrown into a pillar-box a few words addressed to Mlle. Paula Salimberi, an artistic dancer at the Eden Theatre. Paula was a superb girl, a native of Southern Italy, with all the ardour of that clime beaming from her large, dark eyes. She had made her début at Naples, and, after a season at the Italian Theatre at Nice, had displayed to the Parisians her irreproachable dancing and varied graces.

Montbrun was then twenty-eight years of age, a handsome man, well versed in theatrical doings, whose personal charms were augmented by an income of sixty thousand francs a year. His admiration for the charming ballet-dancer was at once reciprocated, and they were soon launched upon the waves of a desperate flirtation. But the young man's fancy was short-lived. It was not long before the shallow attractions of the Italian beauty ceased to please him, and he longed to escape from her altogether.

But Othello's jealousy was puerile compared with hers. Montbrun was fairly afraid of her. He dared not tell her outright what the gradual decline of his attentions portended. He had simply dropped a note to her upon his departure for Vitré, bidding her a long farewell, and intimating that he might never see her again. As he believed that she had no means of procuring his address, he thought himself now well out of her way.

Mass was over, and people were beginning to come out of the church. Suddenly Montbrun was seized with admiration. Amid the crowd he had caught sight of the face of a young girl. Never in his most ardent dreams had he imagined aught so lovely as that face, with its ideal lines, its more than earthly beauty—beauty so calm, so serene, so radiantly pure that it seemed that of one of God's angels.

He wondered if it were possible that such a creature existed. He held his breath as he gazed on her descending the church steps, smiling at an older woman who accompanied her—her mother, doubtless. Instinctively, Montbrun followed them from afar, and saw them enter a small house of modest appearance. Taking the number, he returned to the hotel and asked for information.

"The beautiful girl? Mlle. de Larade! Her father was an excellent man; his family was rich before the Revolution, but each succeeding generation had sold off, little by little, lands and fields and woods to keep up their rank. Finally, poor M. de Larade had taken refuge in a small building formerly occupied by his servant. There he lived, as best he could, with his wife and his daughter Jeanne. He had probably not more than twelve or fifteen francs a day income; but the ladies knew how to live on very little, while he, poor gentleman, had even given up taking snuff."

The Viscount wrote to his lawyer at Paris, requesting him at once to send him a letter of introduction to a lawyer of Vitré, and to apprise that gentleman that he, Montbrun, came of a good family, had the reputation of being a man of honour, and was not without fortune. After which the lawyer of Vitré would effect his acquaintance with a family wherein he hoped to find happiness.

Everything happened as the Viscount had arranged. He was presented to Mlle. Jeanne de Larade, found her all he had thought, came again and again to her home, and was finally accepted as her future husband, upon certain conditions. Montbrun promised everything they wished. He was in an ecstasy of bliss during the few weeks which preceded the day fixed for his marriage.

In the midst of his dreaming he received, through his lawyer—he had carefully concealed his address from all others—a letter from one of his friends, who wrote him that Paula Salimberi was seeking him in every direction, and uttering direful threats.

At length the eventful day arrived. The contract had been signed. Two friends of Montbrun had come from Paris to serve him as witnesses, and on the 10th of September, at eleven in the morning, the guests left in carriages for the Mayor's office. The Viscount, and two or three persons, were speaking with a functionary at that office, when they were startled by a piercing scream, followed by a loud clamour of voices.

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Rushing to the windows they saw a hurrying crowd, amid which a small group was massed about a recumbent form.

"What has happened?" exclaimed Montbrun, almost suffocated by dismay.

"An unknown woman has thrown vitriol in the face of Mlle. de Larade. All one side of the poor child's face is badly burnt, and an eye destroyed. They are carrying her to her home."

Montbrun fell, rigid and unconscious, to the floor.

He tried vainly during the day to be received at the home of his betrothed.

"Tell him that he will never see me again!" she cried, shedding tears that, rolling over her scarred cheeks, burnt her like fire.

The suffering of M. de Montbrun was intense; consumed with fever, his heart seemed pressed in a vice.

A little later a small package was delivered to him.

The unknown woman—arrested immediately after the perpetration of her crime—stated that her name was Paula Salimberi; her motive, vengeance.

Montbrun shut himself in his bedroom and opened his parcel, which contained a small quantity of white powder. Folding a handkerchief into a bandage, he measured out two spoonfuls of the powder and spread it on the bandage, which he then placed over his eyes, tying it in a firm knot at the back of his head.

Two hours after, he arrived at the home of M. de Larade, in a coupé, from which the lawyer of Vitré helped him to descend.

"Do not come in," said Madame de Larade, "it would kill Jeanne."

"Tell her that she may receive me now," replied M. de Montbrun; "we shall be married as soon as she is able to leave the house. For me, her image will remain eternally what it was—I am blind."

M. and Mme. de Montbrun lead a retired life in their château at Juvisy. Jeanne adores the husband who for her renounced for ever the sight of sky and fields and flowers. As for the blind man, he has kept intact the picture of an ideal maiden smilingly descending the steps of the church of St. Martin. He is happy, for, in the unending night to which he has condemned himself, he sees her always young, always beautiful.

IT was a fine afternoon, towards the end of September.

In the quaint and narrow street of a little Spanish town, situated upon the shores of the Mediterranean, a crowd had gathered round a lottery office to stare at the list of winning numbers attached to the wall. Upon the outside of the crowd stood a woman dressed in rags, a lottery ticket in her hand. Unable to read herself, she was imploring others to help her.

"Has my number won?" she was crying. "Ah, poor Dios! Tell me, has my number won!"

But she could get no response. Her neighbours were too much absorbed in their own fortune or misfortune to attend to her.

While she was still reiterating her solitary question, there appeared at the bend of the street a graceful little lady, wearing a mantilla, arranged over a high comb. She had a very sweet face, upon which was stamped an expression of patient resignation. The lustre of her large, dark eyes was somewhat faded, and her dark hair was streaked with grey. But as she walked alone, more briskly than Spanish ladies usually do, much more briskly than the servant behind her liked, she smiled to herself as if under the influence of a pleasant dream, and used her fan with just enough coquetry to suggest that the dream related to an absent lover.

"Let me see your number," she said to the woman with the lottery ticket. She took the paper and compared it with the one on the wall. "No," she added presently, "I don't see your number."

"I have not lost again," cried the miserable speculator, "Say I have not lost again."

"I fear you have," said the lady gently. "But see, here is a 'real' for you."

Without waiting to hear the blessings which were invoked upon her, she walked swiftly away, murmuring, "My number has won, at any rate." And then she smiled.

As she passed by, the shopkeepers sitting within their doors cast after her sleepy glances in which could be detected an element of pity, if not of contempt.

"It is long enough she had waited for him," said an officer in artillery uniform, one of a group sitting outside a casino.

"Poor fool," said another. "He has seen many brighter eyes than hers."

"She thinks not."

"Miguel faithful!" exclaimed a third. "But it is wasting soap to lather a Moor's head!" Whereat they all laughed.

Everybody in the town knew the story of the Dona Dolores Morano de Cuesta, and no Spaniard could understand it. While a mere girl she had been betrothed to a young officer named Miguel Garciay Blanco, who had a fine long list of ancestors, but no money. For this reason the marriage had been deferred until he had gained a rank that would enable him to support a wife. He had for years been away from his native land on foreign service, and now, this afternoon, his vessel was expected home from Cuba. Judged by his letters, he still loved her; certainly she still loved him, or, rather, her remembrance of him. Their constancy puzzled all who knew them. It was only to be accounted for (so they said) by supposing that they were both a little weak in the head.

The town gate opened upon the quay. Underneath the wall lay the usual concourse of cripples, basking in the sunlight and imploring alms. Immediately in front a band was playing.

When Dolores arrived upon the scene, a troopship had just come alongside. Swarthy soldiers were pouring along the unprotected gangways, and forming in line upon the quay. Dolores, with heightened colour and quickened pace, pressed forward to join the crowd which had gathered, and eagerly scanned the face of each new arrival.

A tall, thin officer, wearing a commandant's uniform, stepped on shore, and, merely bestowing a careless, indolent smile upon the spectators, passed her so closely that she could almost touch him. She looked at his handsome, furrowed features, then her face brightened. She was trembling in every limb.

"Miguel!" she gasped, with a dart of the hand. He turned, pulled his moustache, and stared at her for several moments before he recognised her.

"What? Dolores? Is it you?" he said.

"Oh, Miguel, don't you know me?" she faltered.

"Yes, I know you now (he shook hands with her), but how

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changed you are. Your hair is grey." He was back in the bygone years, and had forgotten the change in himself.

"But my heart is unchanged," she said.

"Ah!" he replied carelessly, "how I have looked forward to this moment!"

"And now you are disappointed." She was almost crying.

"Disappointed! No. Why should you say so. But I must be going" (as a bugle reminded him of his duties). "Shall we meet to-morrow—at the old time and place?"

"To-morrow! Why not to-night? At Isabel's?"

"I fear I shall be too busy."

She looked at him in despair. "To-morrow, then," she replied, and raising his cap he went away.

Dolores remained where she was until the soldiers had marched away; then, tottering to a chair, sat down and hid her white face behind her fan.

Was it for this she had waited so patiently, through long and lonely years? "Your hair is grey," he had said to her. What did those cruel words mean? That those old days had gone, never to return? As she sat there in the sunlight her grief vanished away, and in its place there arose a fierce desire to be revenged. But now several of her friends had joined her, and although she chatted with them she found it so difficult (as most Spanish women do) to control her feelings, that, calling her maid, she soon started for home. On her way she met the woman with the lottery ticket, now in a state of great excitement.

"You were mistaken, beautiful lady," she cried. "My number has won, blessed be the Virgin!"

"Ah!" said Dolores; "it is I who have lost."

Dolores occupied the first floor of a house situated at the corner of the "Plaza," a fine open square with fountains in the centre. Once inside her room she allowed her feelings more freedom. Her maid, while engaged in changing her walking dress for a loose wrapper, was surprised to find her usually amiable mistress so petulant and out of sorts. When alone, Dolores vented her anger upon the inanimate objects around her, notably Miguel's portrait, which she threw to the ground and stamped upon. Having cooled her anger, she sat down to think out a scheme of revenge; as evening drew on, and the lamps were lighted, she was still elaborating her plans. Yet, when finished, they were very simple. She had decided to request the assistance of a cousin, a hot-headed duellist and an officer of the Marines. He was to provoke a quarrel with Miguel, call him out, and run him through the body. That was all.

Dolores began to write to her cousin, but was interrupted by the tinkling of a bell. She knew well what it signified, and seizing the lamp she hurried out to the balcony.

A procession was just leaving the monastery at the opposite corner of the "Plaza" beyond the fountains. It was headed by a boy with a bell; then came a white-hooded priest with something in his hands; then black-robed priests, who held a red umbrella over his head; and, lastly, a motley crowd from the streets around. It advanced swiftly towards Dolores, preceded by crowds of women who knelt to let it pass them, then running forward knelt again. At the ringing of the bell lamps appeared in all the balconies, and from all, as the priests glided silently and swiftly through the gloom, kneeling figures looked down upon them.

Dolores, kneeling in her balcony, prayed for the departing soul. But with this prayer was mingled another—that her revenge might soon be realised. It seemed as though a complete change had been wrought in this woman—hitherto so kind and gentle and patient in her long wait for her lover, now burning with revenge—that revenge being the death of her lover. Therefore, preoccupied as she was with her solitary idea, it was with unusual indifference that she watched the rapid approach of the priests bearing the Sacrament. She saw them pass under her balcony, and saw them turn into the street at the corner of which her home stood. Then her curiosity was slightly aroused.

"He lives in the end house, if he has gone back to his old quarters," she murmured, still kneeling. Her interest grew as the procession sped on. When was it going to stop? Now? Or now? No, it held on its way. But, oh! What was that, a cold thrill ran through her veins, it had stopped at his house. "Oh, Sainted Mother," she cried, "surely no harm has happened to him!"

Summoning her maid, she ran out into the street.

"Who is dying?" she demanded of the first person she met.

"The Commandant Miguel," was the reply.

Forgetful of appearances, of her revenge, of everything, she rushed back for her mantilla.

"It can't be," she gasped. Her maid tried to soothe her, but all to no purpose. She was determined to see him, and for this purpose again went out, passing the procession on its way back to the monastery; she sped on to his house. Arrived at the door she stopped and rang. The servant who appeared said with fear, "Ah; child of my heart, you are too late. But blessed be the Virgin, he received the Sacrament before he died."

Unmindful of her words, Dolores pushed past the excited domestic, who had thus addressed her, and entered the house. She knew the situation of Miguel's rooms, by the windows, although she had never been inside the house before. So with noiseless steps she ran up the stairs to the first floor. The door of the bedroom stood ajar, a lamp was burning on a small table by the side of the bed on which he lay.

So she could see his stiff, cold features only too plainly. Yet she would not believe that he was dead. She flung herself upon the bed, and, passionately kissing his cold lips, implored him to speak to her. Oh, why would he not answer her? Why was he so silent? Did he know what she had been doing when the bell summoned her to the window?

So passed many a weary hour, until at last they moved her gently away, and she suffered herself to be taken home, where she remained, listless, dazed, and motionless.

"He is not dead! he cannot be dead!" was her one cry.

But the next morning, when the usual black-edged card announced the time of the funeral, her passionate energy broke out afresh. Clinging to her solitary idea, she visited Miguel's colonel in order to request him to defer the funeral. This request was denied, but, thinking to pacify her, the colonel agreed to have him buried in the catacombs and a sentry put there to guard the tomb. Solaced with this promise, she went home.

The funeral was a very grand one, the procession long; but it was over at last, and the single sentry left at his post at the gate of the catacombs.

The sentry, a young Spaniard, full of Spanish superstition, did not at all relish his new duty. Shortly before dawn, while the valleys were still plunged in gloom, and only the higher peaks had as yet caught the glow of the advancing sun, a startling thing happened. A tall figure, wrapped in grave-clothes, came rushing through the cemetery, with its white drapery flowing behind. It made straight for the gate where stood the trembling sentry.

Here was the ghost he had been dreading. There was no time to turn, no time to consider, and lifting his rifle, he fired, almost at random, and fled. He heard a wild, unearthly cry, which seemed to freeze his blood; he heard it again, echoing among the mountains, but nothing else. On, on he flew, but presently, finding he was not pursued, stopped on a slight hill, and thence looked back upon the white, motionless figure, upon a coach, which was being driven at full speed along the road. Seeing that it stopped at the cemetery gate he hastened down to meet it.

"Where is he? Where is he? He was alive when I left home, I know he was!" cried a woman's voice.

"Señora, a white thing came tearing across the grass; I fired; it lies at the gates."

Dolores sprang out of the coach, and was beside the "white thing" in an instant. "You have killed him!" she exclaimed, and fell back.

"You brute!" cried her maid. "You have killed her, too!"

It was quite true. The terrible awakening had come to her lover, just as Dolores had thought, and now she had followed him to the Land of Shadows.

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THE TENTH OF JUNE.

By John K. Leys, *Author of "In the Toils," "My Hindoo Friend," &c., &c.*

Illustrated by Raymond Potter.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The End of the Vendetta.

"Backwater!" cried Geoffrey.

It is doubtful whether the three Frenchmen understood the word, but they understood well enough what was meant, for they protested loudly that the boat would be dashed in pieces—she was already overladen—she would be swamped if they took another man on board.

But Geoffrey, taking the fourth oar, held it out to the sinking man. He had just strength enough to grasp it, and Geoffrey towed him up to the gunwale of the boat.

"Pull ahead now!" he cried; and a few minutes later he and the General managed to haul the Rajah on board.

He lay like one dead in the bottom of the boat. It was impossible, cramped as they were for room, to examine his wound, or do anything beyond trying to make him conscious.

At length he opened his eyes, and said, when Leila asked him, that he was not suffering much pain. All they could do for him was to shelter him as much as possible from the rain and the spray that washed over them; and Leila made her feet a pillow for his head.

No one but Leila, indeed, had much time to think of him after he was pulled out of the sea. The question was whether they would be able to make the land. Every now and then, as the tiny craft rolled in the trough of the sea, it seemed as if she must be swamped outright. It seemed impossible to make headway against the wind.

Ernest Fresual, indeed, thought they should abandon the attempt to land that night, and let the wind carry them out to sea, where they might be picked up next day; and, the Englishmen, not being sailors, were inclined to agree with him. Jacques Fresnal, however, pulled away at his oar without vouchsafing a reply.

"Suppose the wind falls, we might keep afloat till we are picked up," he said at length. "But suppose it rises, what then? We should be swamped; that's all. Bah!"

"I think we are getting a little further in," said Geoffrey, after a long look at the horizon. "I don't think the waves are quite so high. We must be getting under the lee of the land, for I am sure the wind is stronger than ever."

Geoffrey towed him up to the gunwale of the boat.

They landed without much difficulty.

Fresual nodded assent.

"It is stronger," he said. "If we were now where we were an hour ago, we should be in the water."

There were no lights to guide them but the street lamps of the town, and these still seemed a long way off, when a loud sound like an explosion, followed by a strange rumbling noise fell on their ears.

"What can that be?" each one said, and looked at his neighbour. Even those who were rowing, stopped, and bent their heads to listen. But the noise was not repeated.

The Rajah had heard it, and had grasped the side of the boat with one hand, and pulled himself up till he was able to look out on the horizon. There was nothing but black darkness to be seen; but there was in his great eyes a look of intelligence and satisfaction.

Leila noticed it, and when she had helped him to lie down again in the bottom of the boat, she whispered to him,

"What was that dreadful noise?"

"The steamer is blown up," he said composedly.

"What!—You do not mean——?"

"Do you not remember? You made me promise to kill you, rather than that the Hindoos should keep you. There was only one way to do that and to avenge your death at the same time. I fastened down the safety-valve of the engine. Now the boiler has burst, and as she is helpless she must either go to the bottom, or those on board of her will be taken. They cannot escape."

The girl shuddered, but she said no more.

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The dawn was breaking when the boat, laden to the gunwale, drew slowly near to the beach. It was now blowing harder than ever, but near shore the water was comparatively smooth, and they landed without much difficulty.

While the General and Geoffrey were conveying Leila and the Rajah to Madame Fresual's, Linton thought of Captain Byngham, and ran off to the Villa Carnot. But the house was empty, and the two lamps that had been placed in the upper window had been extinguished. It was easy to guess what had happened. Byngham had managed to slip off his gag, and had called out; or one of the sailors, perhaps, in search of more brandy, had gone into the sitting-room and found him. Then they had released him, and they had all gone off together.

When the light grew stronger, the false *Aphrodite* was visible, a big black dot against the northern horizon. The explosion had rendered her helpless, though it had not sent her to the bottom, as the Rajah had imagined it would do.

She was still riding at anchor, when she was boarded some hours' later by a French revenue cutter, and not a soul was on board. The Hindoos, rather than be taken, had gone off in another small boat, and as they never were heard of again, there could not be a doubt that their boat had been swamped, and all on board of her lost.

A big black dot against the northern horizon.

As for Captain Byngham, he had disappeared entirely, and for some time the General and his friends were much puzzled to know what had become of him. After a time, however, it transpired that a small pleasure boat, which had been lying on the beach that night, not far from the Villa Carnot, was missing; and it seemed tolerably certain that Captain Byngham, and the four seamen, had gone off in her with the intention of reaching the steamer.

If they did reach her they must have left her again after the explosion, along with the Hindoos; but it seemed more likely that they had not come up to the steamer before the explosion, and had missed her in the darkness, there being no one on board to signal to them, and so had been blown out to sea and lost.

The story of the Tenth of June is now told

The Rajah's wound was not a mortal one. He recovered; and as the General insisted on taking him to Seacombe Towers, as soon as he could be moved there, to be nursed into convalescence, it was only natural that Jane Stoddart should be asked to take a share in the good work. The consequence was that five months later the eldest Miss Stoddart became the Ranee of Nagore.

Geoffrey's wooing prospered wonderfully after that memorable Tenth of June. Indeed the General himself said to him the very next morning:

"You remember a conversation you and I had in London just before we started for America? Well, after what has happened I wish you to forget what I said then. In short, I like you, Geoffrey; I owe my life to you; and if you can make the running with Leila, I won't play the part of the stern father. If Leila chooses elsewhere she can tell you herself; but as far as I am concerned I wish you success."

Geoffrey took the General at his word; and that same evening Leila laid her little hand in his and promised to be his wife.

Among the various wedding presents that were given and received on the occasion of the double wedding, was one which attracted great attention. This was the curious black opal which had been taken from the Temple at Churruckpore.

It was presented to the Rajah by the General; but the Ranee does not count it among her treasures. Amavati knew it from Chunder Sen's description to be the mysterious gem which the Brahmins revered as a relic of the last avatar, or incarnation, of Vishnu. He knew that in their eyes it was of priceless value, and he offered it to the priests of his old faith as a farewell gift. No white man's eye will ever behold it again.

THE END.

AT THE PRESENT MOMENT

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THE BROTHERS LORKE.

THE Hon. Richard Plantagenet Lorke differed from most Englishmen of distinction in that his breeding was as unimpeachable as his physical comeliness was striking. In conversation his tones were not self-assertive and blatant, but, on the contrary, as soft and winning as a woman's. He never bragged of his nation's achievements, nor sneered covertly at the manners and customs of the hospitable American friends that entertained him so handsomely. He did not make a practice of expressing his contempt for American society by going to dinner parties in tweed clothes, and had no fondness for indulging in heavy drinking, and then criticising the quality of his host's liquor.

He was civil to all men, and gracefully polite to all women—particularly the old ones. Moreover, he had not yet been known to play cards for high stakes or borrow money from the members of the clubs at which he had been put up. He had even been known to recognise the point of a joke, and—most marvellous of all!—occasionally crack a very fair one himself.

All this was very extraordinary to the critical American society, though, of course, no one was so impolite as to comment upon it openly. It was little Freddy Dinkelspiel, the rich jeweller's grandson, that would have obliged any foreign nobleman on earth with a loan of ten thousand, and thanked the fates for the opportunity of doing it, that confided, awe-stricken and *sotto voce*, to one of his cronies: "Of course, I like Lorke as well as any of you, but, hang me, if he doesn't seem too much of the gentleman to be the son of an Earl."

This was some six weeks after the superb figure and golden Grecian head of the Hon. Richard Plantagenet Lorke had first appeared to dazzle the youthful and gilded set of the Whipper-Snapper Club. There was a freshness about his smile, and a sunniness in the straightforward gaze of his bright, blue eyes that won him a welcome at once. Further than that, the man that had introduced him, young Caspar Van Dunk, the heir to untold millions, and the very embodiment of all that was exclusive and patrician in New York life, was not a man to be slighted. Van's word was law in such matters, and his assurance that the Englishman's credentials were unimpeachable was more than sufficient.

The newcomer's magnetic personality did the rest. Van Dunk and Lorke were quite inseparable. They walked, drove, dined, and went to the theatre together. They had made each other's acquaintance on the steamer one very stormy day, on which the latter had saved the former's sister a very ugly fall by catching her in his arms at the very instant that a plunge of the vessel had overturned the steamer chair upon which she was reclining while very, very ill.

Truth to tell, the young Briton had never quite forgotten that instant either. Edith was one of those exasperatingly bewitching creatures with the physique of a well-developed woman and the face of a child; and her pathetic glance of gratitude, as the pallor of her cheeks blossomed for an instant into a delicious rosy tint, had made him think momentarily of heaven and the angels.

After that there had been a few stolen moments on deck, when the shy pleasure in the girl's face as he approached her had set his stout British heart beating like a sledge-hammer; and he had, of course, seen her quite often at her own house, where he was a welcome and favoured guest.

But yesterday, only yesterday, when they were cantering in the Park together, with the groom a safe distance behind, she must have grown alarmed at the words he was finding himself sufficiently audacious to utter; for she told him with much stammering and blushing, of her engagement to Mr. Skinnand Fleece, a very prosperous lawyer who was expected home from Europe that very day. And the Hon. Richard Plantagenet Lorke, as they walked their horses homeward, was sufficient of a brute and beast to experience joy in the knowledge that his dainty companion's lip was all a-quiver, and her tender grey eyes melting with moisture suspiciously akin to tears.

In consequence of all of which, the Englishman, second son of an earl though he was, was not in an exactly happy frame of mind as he walked up Fifth Avenue this bright autumn afternoon on his way to his apartments. He was to dine at the Van Dunks', and would meet, among others, Mr. Skinnand Fleece. The thought brought a steely look into the sunny, blue eyes, but it departed instantly, and he found his brain shaping a wish that the girl this infernal lawyer was to rob him of might be as happy as a queen all the days of her life.

. . . . . .

The dinner was, of course, a masterpiece. Banker Van Dunk's dinners always were masterpieces. Lorke, by the way, had quite won his heart by praising them. There were some of Caspar's intimates from the club, a sprinkling of girls and dowagers, and one or two of the host's fellow magnates from Wall Street. The happy Mr. Fleece did not appear—he was expected later—and Lorke was supremely happy during the hour and a half that the beautiful Edith sat beside him.

While the people were chatting in twos and threes in the drawing-room, Lorke and Edith found their way, quite accidentally, of course, into a recess curtained off by half-drawn portières, and in which stood some great vases of ferns and palms. Someone was playing a noisy waltz on the gilt-covered Steinway, and the music quite drowned the half-whispered tones in which they spoke. Lorke's brain was on fire. He had not uttered a dozen words before he broke off short with: "I love you, dear."

The girl's head dropped. "Hush!" she whispered, breathlessly. But they were unobserved, and Lorke, after one swift look round, bent his head and kissed her on the lips.

At the instant he did so there was a commotion in the room, and everyone was welcoming Mr. Skinnand Fleece, who had just entered. As for Edith, she had turned very pale, and seemed about to faint. She managed to control herself, but leaned heavily upon Lorke's arm as they advanced to meet the new-comer.

The glance of Mr. Fleece, who was a very tall man, of perhaps, thirty-five, with a very white complexion and coal-black hair and beard, was not altogether pleasant as it rested on the couple. But suddenly the expression of his white face changed totally. He bestowed on Lorke, for an instant, a cold stare of stony contempt, and as he drew Edith's arm with an exasperating air of proprietorship within his own, he said to her icily: "I am sorry to find you in such company."

The Englishman's lips turned white, and he moved a step forward. Everyone in the room heard the remark. There was a dead silence, which was broken by Lorke:

"I have not the honour of knowing you, sir," he said simply, "but perhaps you will be good enough to explain your meaning."

"Bluffing won't go," rejoined Fleece coarsely. "Of course you don't remember me, eh?"

"I do not, sir."

"Then let me tell you," answered the lawyer, with great heat, "that I remember you—yes, very well indeed—as the accomplished gentleman that swindled me out of £400 at Algiers three months ago by palming the ace of spades in a game of Nap. Do I make myself understood?"

The look of blank amazement that came over Lorke's face gave way swiftly to one of fury. The veins in his forehead swelled. He clenched his fists and seemed ready to spring at the throat of the man that had made this fearful accusation. "You speak falsely, sir," he said quietly.

Meanwhile horrified murmurs of amazement broke from the other guests. Before anyone could speak, Van Dunk, senior

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marched forward and said: "Fleece, this gentleman is my friend and my guest. You might have chosen a more fitting time for your denunciation; but since you have delivered it, I suppose you are prepared to prove what you have said."

"Prove it? Of course, I am," sneered the lawyer. Edith's white lips parted in a pathetic gasp, and the tears came into her eyes. "See! Previous to swindling me, this *gentleman* had presented me with his photograph. I have kept it as a pleasant souvenir of my visit to Algiers, and by the best luck in the world I happen to have it with me. Examine it, sir," handing Lorke the portrait he had wrenched from his pocket; "examine it closely, and then try and summon up the nerve to deny your own identity."

Mechanically the Englishman extended his hand and took the picture. He looked at it, and his face faded to the colour of ashes. The piece of cardboard fell from his hand, and was picked up by Fleece, who proceeded to show it to the wondering guests. The likeness was perfect—blonde hair, kindly eyes, everything.

Lorke was gazing blankly in front of him. He swayed gently to and fro as though about to faint. Young Van Dunk stepped forward and looked into his face. "Lorke," he cried, in grief-stricken tones, "say something, old man; for pity's sake say the thing isn't true!"

For an instant the Englishman returned his gaze, frankly, openly. Then, as his eyes met the agonised ones of Edith, he bowed his head and said huskily: "I have nothing to say."

A whisper of astonishment and indignation ran through the room. Fleece smiled triumphantly and replaced the photograph in his coat pocket. Then the voice of Van Dunk, senior, was heard, saying to a servant: "Jackson, a cab for Mr. Lorke."

One look the condemned man cast upon the white-faced girl that stood beside his accuser with a piteous expression of intreaty in her grey eyes. Then, without glancing to the right or the left, he strode from the room. As he did so it seemed to his dulled senses as though he heard the girl whisper to the lawyer: "I hate you."

. . . . . .

A month of healthy exposure and hardship in the Rocky Mountain hunting country exercised quite an improvement in Lorke's appearance. When he went away he had looked like a consumptive in his last stages; when he returned there was a bronze glow on his smooth cheeks, and something like the old sparkle in his eyes.

Still, he was far from happy as he walked up Fifth Avenue on his way to the Holland House, where he was to stay for the three or four days before he sailed for England. Occasionally his features contracted; his teeth clenched themselves hard as he passed one of his former friends, who, on seeing him, would pass straight by with a stony and altogether unrecognising stare.

Presently the Englishman's heart almost stood still. Coming towards him was Caspar Van Dunk. He nerved himself for the "unkindest cut of all."

But, to his amazement, Caspar stopped short and stood gazing at him with an intensely puzzled expression.

It was Caspar that spoke first. "Why, Lorke," he said, stupidly enough, "but it is not really you, is it?"

"No one else, my—er—fair-weather friend," returned the Englishman coldly.

"But it can't be—no—how did you? Pshaw! I'm hanged if I can read the riddle," stammered the other.

"What riddle?"

"I simply mean to say that only yesterday, you, or a man claiming to be you, and the exact counterpart of what you were when you left, but without the sunburn I see on your face, called on me at the club and asked me for £20. Of course, I gave it him. He was half-drunk, and—well, very shabby, don't you know."

Again Lorke grew white. "I suppose you are convinced it was not I?" he asked.

"Of course, I am," exclaimed Van Dunk, and added, holding out his hand impulsively, "Lorke, I never believed that thing. Won't you explain now?"

"I can't," answered Lorke, and then burst out passionately, "but this last is pretty nearly too much."

"Walk up to the house with me," said Caspar quietly, "and have a chat."

"No," answered Lorke.

"Yes," insisted the other; "besides, Edith will like to see you."

This was enough. As they walked on up the Avenue conversing amiably on unimportant topics, Lorke noticed that the men they passed now looked surprised, it is true, but they bowed just the same. Then it was he felt he loved this patrician American youth like a brother.

At the moment Caspar was inserting his latchkey, the door opened, and a young man came staggering out on the steps. He was the exact and perfect physical counterpart of the Hon. Richard Plantagenet Lorke, save for the absence of the latter's brand-new bronze complexion. Caspar exclaimed: "This is the fellow, Lorke."

The man started back with a maudlin exclamation of horror. As for Lorke, his eyes were blazing. He grasped him by the collar and pushed him back inside the door without a word. Caspar followed, wondering.

"Now, sir," said the Englishman, "I have borne everything thus far, and I have suffered endless tortures for you, but you shall tell me—quickly, too—what you have been doing in this house, or I'll choke your life out."

As the fellow stood swaying backwards and forwards a light footstep was heard, and Edith Van Dunk stepped into the hall. There were traces of tears in her eyes. When she saw Lorke, the light of a great, astonished joy leapt into them. Before she could speak, her brother asked gently, "Edith, what does this fellow's presence here mean?"

"He came about an hour ago," she said blushing. "I saw him from the window, and let him in myself, because——"

"Well?"

"Because I thought it was Mr. Lorke," she said defiantly. Then she broke down and began to cry.

"The mistake was a natural one," said Lorke calmly. "In one respect the resemblance is perfect; but what did he do?"

"He asked me to lend him a hundred pounds, and I let him have it, because——"

Lorke smiled grimly.

"Because you thought it was I? I seem to be an expensive luxury."

"Brother!" whined the drunken man appealingly. Whereat Caspar and his sister started.

"I would not have told it if you hadn't," said Lorke. "Yes, my dear Caspar, this is my sweet, scapegrace brother, whom I promised our mother to care for and protect. I think I've done my duty. It is he that has 'given himself away,' as you Americans would say."

"Then," exploded Edith, "it was he that—that——"

"Precisely," answered Lorke. "Percy, my boy," he added, "you'd better go away from here. Come and see me at the Holland to-night. I'll pay your way home."

. . . . . .

"It was my fault, after all," said Lorke to Edith, during a *tête-à-tête* half an hour afterwards. "You see, I wrote and told him all about my New York visit and Fleece's charge, and begged him to write to your brother and exonerate me. It seems he has used the information I gave him in quite another manner."

"I've a confession to make," whispered Edith.

"And it is——?"

"When I thought he was you—and he looked so broken down and miserable—and it seemed so pitiful that you—*you*" (she blushed divinely) "should be reduced to begging me for a hundred pounds—I think I'd have given him a thousand if he'd asked for it—that—that—you see I thought it was you—that I—I kissed him."

"But what has become of Fleece?" asked Lorke wonderingly.

"I have not spoken to Mr. Fleece," was the answer, delivered in a whisper, "since the last night you were here."

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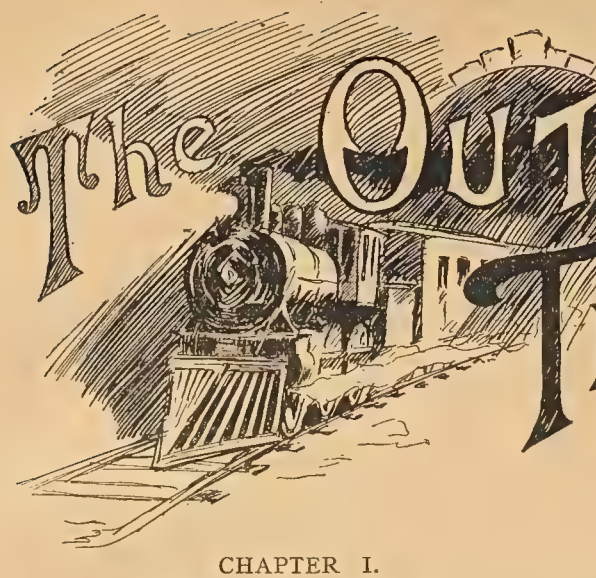

The Outlaws' Treasure.

Illustrated by MR. A. KEMP TEBBY.

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CHAPTER I.

WAITING FOR THE TRAIN.

HALF-PAST nine in the evening, and still no tidings of the express, which was due at La Grange over an hour ago.

The twenty odd passengers who were impatiently looking for its coming were pacing back and forth, stamping their feet—for it was a cool night in autumn—some smoking, all grumbling, and most of them denouncing the railway authorities who had allowed this dereliction of duty to occur on this particular night of all others.

The telegraph office, where a young man continually bent over his clicking machine, was constantly besieged by the fretful passengers, who kept thrusting their heads in at the small door or window, and inquiring whether there were any tidings of the expected train.

The clerk was an exception to the rule, and was polite and communicative. He kept his patience, and answered every question pleasantly, although some of them were of a trying or ludicrous character.

"She left Brampton on time," he answered, "over an hour ago, and came into Cornwall three minutes ahead."

"And did she leave Cornwall on time?"

"To a second; but since then we haven't heard a word of her."

Brampton was twenty miles distant. The express had thundered along for five miles until it had reached Cornwall, where it left on time, and it was now somewhere along the fifteen miles of road between Cornwall and La Grange, and had been there for an hour and a half without any tidings.

Something was wrong. Had the boiler exploded? Had High Bridge, over Devil's Creek, given way with the train upon it? Or had the more harmless accident of a heated "journal" or a mere breakdown rendered the mighty iron horse powerless?

"Why don't you telegraph to Cornwall?" inquired a small man with an immense carpet bag.

"So I have," was the reply.

The corpulent gentleman gave a low whistle.

"And what did they tell you?" was his next question.

"Nothing; for they knew nothing."

"That's queer; what was the reason?"

"The accident or whatever it may be that detains the train, has taken place between here and Cornwall. It may be nearer us than there, and in that case it would be natural that they should apply to us for information instead of we to them."

"As there are only fifteen miles between us and the other station," remarked a large, corpulent man, "the train, wherever it is, must be within eight miles of one of us, and I don't understand how it is that word hasn't reached us."

"Nor I either," replied the clerk significantly. The two men looked in each other's faces for a moment, and then the man that controlled the telegraph motioned to the other to come in and take a seat beside him.

"You seem to be about the most sensible man here," he said with a smile, "and I'll tell you something which no one knows excepting myself and the ticket collector, Brooks, who is too stupid to comprehend what it means." The stout individual stared curiously at him, as if he did not himself comprehend what it all meant.

"The express left Cornwall exactly at eight o'clock," said the young man, speaking in a guarded voice, so as not to be overheard by those who were constantly passing and stopping at the window, "and ought to have made the fifteen miles in about twenty minutes, but here it is over an hour late, and no tidings of it."

"But I know all that before," said the corpulent gentleman, after a moment's pause, thinking there was nothing more to come.

"But I haven't told you that five minutes after the express left Cornwall the wires were cut between here and there."

The corpulent gentleman gave a low whistle, and looked sharply at his informant, whose face lit up with a strange smile.

"Maybe the engine smashed down the telegraph poles, and broke the connection in that way."

"Not much," replied the operator, who occasionally indulged in slang. "It wouldn't have taken ten minutes for them to have restored the connection. No, it is something more serious than that."

"Explain yourself."

"I may as well out with it; I believe the wires have been cut and the express stopped by the Mulligan brothers."

"What! the mail robbers?"

"Yes."

In place of the serial story, entitled "Sindbad's Valley," by Mr. F. Leslie, which we announced in our last issue would commence this week, we have pleasure in giving the opening instalment of "The Outlaws' Treasure," the first few chapters of which appeared some little time back in a publication from this office. We have received many requests to publish this exciting story in its entirety, and take this opportunity of so doing. "The Outlaws' Treasure" will appear in weekly instalments, and will be profusely illustrated throughout by Mr. A. Kemp Tebby. On its completion we shall hope to publish Mr. Leslie's story in these columns.

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It thundered round the curve.

"By Jingo!" exclaimed the passenger, with another whistle. "I shouldn't wonder if you're right. I am from Chicago, and I didn't know that this is the part of the country where those gentry work. But how is it the train is kept so long? I understood such things were done in quick time."

"So they are: it hasn't taken them fifteen minutes to go through the train, and get all the booty they wanted."

"Then what does it mean?"

"They have thrown it off the rails, and cut the wires in several places. The train I think will be here shortly."

"Do you allow such things in this part of the country?"

"How are we going to help it?"

"Why don't you have them arrested, tried, sent to prison, hanged or shot, or something else?"

"It is very easy for you to talk," said the clerk, warming up, "but it is another thing to act. Let a man testify against these villains, or let him be suspected of wishing to testify, and his life isn't worth a pin. There isn't a judge that dare sentence one of the gang, nor can a jury be found to convict them. So what would *you* do under the circumstances?"

"Organise a Vigilance Committee, and root them out, hunt them with dogs, and never stop hunting until they were extirpated from the face of the earth."

Young Brown stroked his beardless chin, and laughed in his quiet way, but said nothing.

"How many brothers are there?" inquired his companion.

"Two: Jim and Dick."

"And are these two sufficient to lord it over all of you?"

"They are the leaders. There are a half-dozen associated with them, and a more desperate set of villains never went unhung. It would be no easy matter to capture six or eight of them, as you can well imagine."

"Of course, it would be no child's play; but I presume it will have to come to that. They will keep on, I suppose, until the people will have to rise in self-defence. Do you know these men?"

"I know them as well as I do you, or better, as I never saw you before."

"You may call me Smith. What sort of looking men are they?"

"Dick is tall, slim, with hair as long and black as an Indian's, with a sandy complexion and heavy red whiskers."

"Yes," commented Smith, in an indifferent manner, strangely at variance with the excitement he had shown a few minutes before. "Do they live anywhere near here?"

"Last summer they lived about a mile up the road, with their mother; but since her death they haven't had any regular place of residence, and I suppose spend their leisure time in the woods."

"Do you know where their hiding-place is?"

"It isn't far from here. Between La Grange and Cornwall is a tract of wood, about ten miles broad, and fully twenty miles long. It is cut up with creeks, streams, and ravines, and a good deal of it is swamp. Here these fellows have their hiding-place, and it would take a smart set of men to hunt them out and effect their capture."

"Then I presume the train has to cross this trac timber?"

"Yes; about ten miles of the fifteen between us and the other station is taken up with the forest. Were it not night you could see the edge of the woods from the platform out there."

"Have they ever attacked the train before?"

"Twice; last summer they robbed the safe of the Adams' Express Company, and a couple of months ago attempted it again, but failed, and Dick Mulligan came very nigh getting his head blown off."

"How was it that they failed?"

"They put some rails upon the line, but instead of throwing the engine off, they were knocked aside. Dick Mulligan and one of his men were in the train, and got into the forward van, where Jim Wilkins was lying on top of the safe, and attempted to bind and gag him, but the plucky little fellow bombarded them so well with his revolver that they were glad enough to jump out of the van and run."

"And all this has happened," continued the burly Smith, with a palpable sneer upon his face, "and it has been known that it was likely to happen again every day, and yet you have invited the outrage by leaving yourselves defenceless."

"Whom do you mean by *you*?" inquired Brown, with a smile.

"The railway and the Express Company, and everybody who lives in the neighbourhood, and among the latter I reckon you, of course."

"Well, perhaps I am not altogether guiltless, but still allowances must be made. I never suspected that I was the man to lead in the formation of a Vigilance Committee, but I am ready to lend a hand at any time."

"Is there are reward offered for the capture of the Mulligan brothers?"

"There is a standing reward of £2,000 for the arrest and conviction of the whole gang, or £200 a-piece for every one who may be secured and punished."

"Enough to incite some of you ambitious young men to action. That would make a good marriage settlement for a young gentleman like you."

"Yes, it is quite an inducement. I hope it may induce some outside parties to engage in it."

The two men smiled, and looked at each other's faces.

"You may not be so far——hello!"

At that instance a sharp whoop was heard, and the telegraph clerk exclaimed:

"There comes the train."

A moment later the red glow of the headlight was seen as it thundered round the curve.

The corpulent Smith rushed out upon the platform with the other passengers, leaving Brown, the telegraph clerk, all unsuspicious of the fact that he had been *tête-à-tête* with one of the most skilful detectives in the United States, and a man whose business was specially to look after these same Mulligan brothers and their gang.

Stood with his hand upon the throttle.

CHAPTER II.

THE ROBBERY.

ON that cool autumn night the express steamed out of Cornwall, and as soon as it was fairly beyond the village rapidly increased its speed. It had twenty minutes to do the fifteen miles in, and as the immense driving-wheels spun faster and faster, and the ponderous piston-rods went and came, with their smooth, easy, and momentarily increasing motion, the engine-driver was confident of going into the La Grange station not a second behind time.

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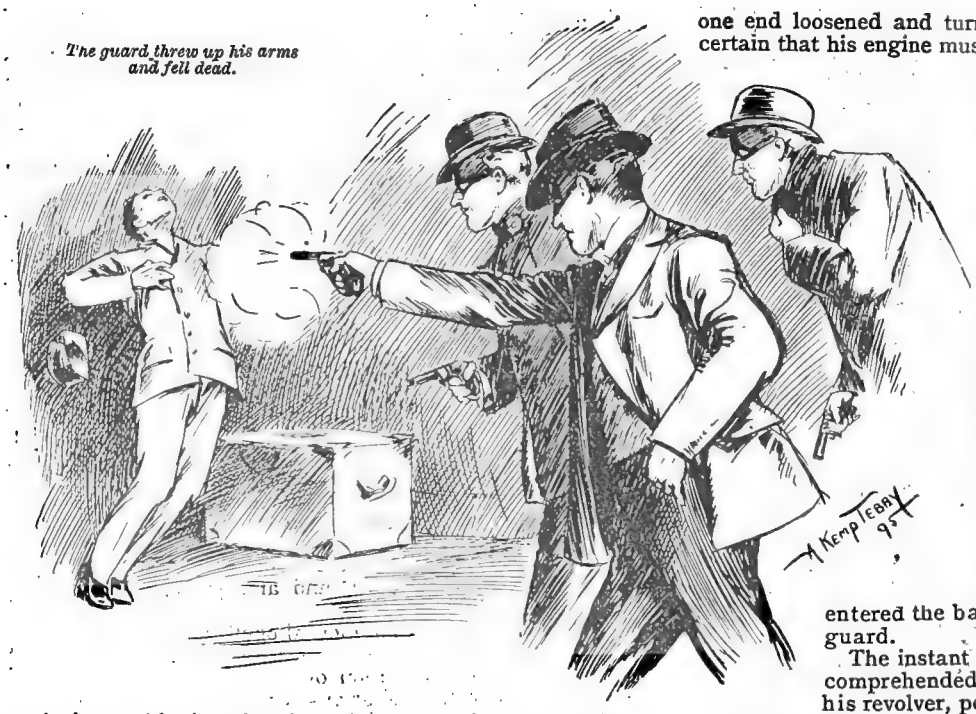

The guard threw up his arms and fell dead.

As is usual in America the train was made up of Pullman cars. There were three passenger-cars, besides the baggage and express car, and in the three former were not over thirty passengers, all told. In the forward part of the baggage-car was the huge safe belonging to the Adams' Express Company, under the guardianship of a drowsy-looking individual, who was smoking a pipe.

Near him was the guard, having in charge the United States mails—a wide-awake, nervous-looking individual, who, having just been appointed to his situation, had a large sense of its responsibilities and his own importance. The baggage-master was in the same compartment, quietly smoking a cigar, and fully as wide-awake as his companions.

Wilkins, the regular agent in charge of the valuable safe, lay dangerously ill at his home, fifty miles distant, and his deputy had been acting in his place for three days.

For a short time succeeding the robbery mentioned by Brown, an extra guard had accompanied the express; but as this involved an extra expense it was discontinued after a lapse of a few weeks, and matters were progressing in the same quiet manner as usual.

One mile out from Cornwall, and the train was tearing forward at a speed of about fifty miles an hour.

Five miles were passed in this manner, when the driver began slacking up, as his train approached High Bridge, leading over a deep, swampy stream, known as the "Devil's Creek." At the same time, his whistle sounded long and loud, its echoes reverberating for a great distance through the forest arches, as a warning to any daring pedestrians who might be meditating an attempt to cross the bridge.

The speed was considerably slackened, and the train rumbled over the bridge, the engine giving a sharp jerk forward, before it was fairly clear, and rapidly regained its terrific speed. There were woods upon every hand, while not a house was to be seen for miles.

Another mile was passed, and they were six from La Grange. The engine-driver again drew up as he neared a sharp curve, and stood with his hand upon the throttle, ready to let on or shut off the steam, as he should discover the lines clear or not.

Another second and the whistle gave two sharp screeches, twice repeated, and the wheels spun backward with lightning-like velocity, grinding and grasping until a stream of fire flew from beneath them.

What was the cause of this alarming signal?

Only a few hundred yards ahead he saw a rail displaced—one end loosened and turned aside just enough to make it certain that his engine must run off the line. Everything was done to check the speed, but no power in nature could check the fearful momentum of the train.

All that could be done was to slow the speed, and this was done so effectually that when the dangerous point was reached the engine was going less than ten miles an hour.

As was expected, the wheels ran off, ground their way down in the gravel, and then bounded over the ties and rails for a few yards, severely jolting the engine, and dragging the tender and front car after it, but doing them no serious injury. Suddenly the train halted, with the wheels of the locomotive less than a foot from the track.

At the very instant the whistle of the engine sounded, three men, their faces covered with masks, which had been placed on after passing out of the front car, entered the baggage-car, and made for the mail guard.

The instant the latter caught sight of them, he comprehended what it meant, and jerking out his revolver, pointed it at the foremost:

"Come a step nearer, and you're a dead man."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the sharp crack of a pistol broke upon the rumble and jumble of the train, and the guard threw up his arms and fell dead, pierced through the heart by the bullet of one of the mail robbers.

While one proceeded to take charge of the bags, the other two forced their way into the room, where the sentinel over the safe of Adams' Express Company had just started to his feet, terrified at the signal of the whistle and the pistol-shot and cry that had reached his ear.

"Come on, we must leave."

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"No use!" called out Dick Mulligan, pointing his pistol at him; "give us the key."

The poor fellow stood like one dumfounded, hardly comprehending the frightful peril which was upon him.

But there was no time for delay, and the robber took the shortest method to bring him to his senses. Catching him by the throat, he whipped out a fearful-looking knife, and flashing it before his eyes, shouted, "*The Key.*"

The trembling wretch put his hand into his breast-pocket, and after fumbling about a moment took it out empty, and managed to reply loud enough for them to hear:

"It don't open with a key; it is a combination lock."

"Then open it, and be quick about it, or we'll open you."

He turned to obey, but at this juncture the car began bumping over the ties and cross-pieces so furiously that he was unable to do what they commanded.

A moment later the train came to an abrupt standstill, and the guard placed his hand upon the polished knob surrounded by its bewildering rows of figures. As he began turning it he heard voices, and made several false moves, in the hope of gaining time, until his friends could come to his assistance.

The shrewd assassins detected his purpose in an instant, and Dick Mulligan shouted in his gruff voice:

"Another dodge like that, and it will be your last. I've settled the other fellow, and I'd just as lief settle you."

There were now several other men in the car, and the fact that their faces, too, were blackened, and covered with masks, showed the express guard that he had gone too far to retreat.

Several quick, nervous movements, and the ponderous door of the safe was pulled wide open, and revealed the bags of solid coin and the boxes of jewellery within, while the keeper stepped back and waited for the robbers to help themselves.

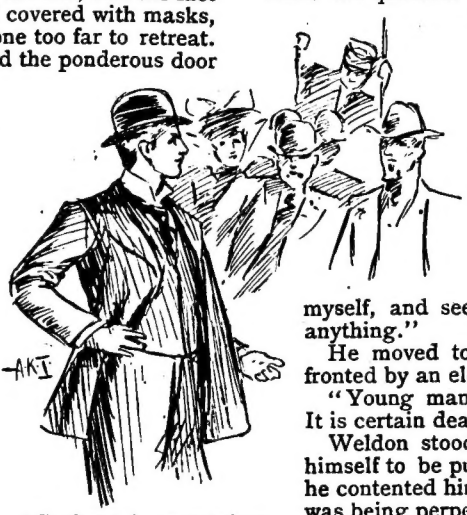
It is needless to say that they did so without any further invitation or delay.

Twenty thousand pounds odd lay nestling there, in the little heavy sacks, and a large quantity of jewellery, which in a twinkling were distributed among the members of the robber party.

In the meantime a couple of them were busy "going through" the mail bags, all unmindful of the poor fellow who lay silent and lifeless beside them.

"Never mind that, Tom," called out Dick Mulligan, looking in upon them. "We haven't time to bother with that."

"What kind of haul have you made?" inquired the individual addressed, rising to his feet, and casting about a bushel of letters from him.



"Gentlemen, how many of you have revolvers?"

"A healthy one; it won't pay to bother about love-letters. Come on; we must leave."

Two minutes later, of the eight masked men not a single one remained visible to the passengers upon the train.

The engine had not yet ceased bounding over the ties when the driver saw several men spring up from the ground, like phantoms, and make towards the car. He needed nothing more to understand what was coming, and he did all that he could do under the circumstances—remained quiescent, and left them free to do as they chose.

"Keep still," he said in a low voice to his fireman who showed a disposition to jump from the engine and run. "Just keep still and say nothing."

"But they may murder us all."

"If you make any fuss and try to run they'll put a bullet through you. They are doing nothing only robbing the express safe, and if we lie low they won't hurt us."

"But what an outrage they are committing!"

"What of it? The Adams' Express Company can stand it, and if they can't, we ain't under any obligation to be shot on their account."

The driver spoke like a philosopher, and the fireman took his advice.

With the violent stopping of the train there was naturally a great commotion created among the passengers. Several thrust their heads out of the windows, but most of them sprang to the ground before the train had fairly come to a stand, and rushed towards the front.

"What's the matter? Anybody killed? Is it a broken rail? Have we got to stay here all night?"

Such and similar were the questions shouted as the frightened men scrambled forward in the darkness. The answer to their questions came in a manner as startling as it was unexpected.

Crack! crack! crack! and several bullets whistled about their ears, and the hoarse voice of Jim Mulligan rang out upon the night air:

"Back, every one of you! Back, I tell you, if you don't want your brains blown out!"

Were it not for the tragic deed that had already been committed, the sudden obedience to this mandate would have been ludicrous. Pell-mell, leaping and tumbling over each other, rolling down the slight declivity scrambling headlong, all the passengers were back in their seats in a much shorter time than they had left them.

Among the different passengers, there was one who was not terrified out of his senses. Fred Weldon, a young man, with a clean shaven face, rose and said:

"Gentleman, how many of you have revolvers?"

After the question was repeated several times, half-a-dozen informed him that they were armed.

"Those Mulligan brothers are at the bottom of this. I propose that we make a fight with them. Besides doing the country a service, there is a chance of making a nice reward for the business. Follow me, and we will teach them a lesson or two."

But not one offered to do so.

"Very well," replied the young man, with an expression of disgust, after he had waited a minute for the response; "if you are afraid, I will take a look myself, and see whether there is a chance for me to do anything."

He moved towards the door, but found himself confronted by an elderly man in spectacles.

"Young man, you don't know what you are doing. It is certain death; remain where you are."

Weldon stood irresolute a minute, but he suffered himself to be pushed back in his seat by his friend, and he contented himself as best he could while the outrage was being perpetrated so close at hand.

When the dead body of the mail agent was found, a gasp of horror escaped the passengers, and Weldon exclaimed impetuously:

"This might have been prevented if you had done as I wished."

"You are mistaken," said the expressman; "he was shot before the train stopped. I heard the pistol."

"We might have punished them, then," he replied.

The body was laid aside, and carefully covered, while the expressman locked the door of the safe, the interior, which so short a time before was filled with such riches, being now empty.

The passengers next turned their attention towards getting the engine back on the rails.

This, it is scarcely necessary to say, was a work of extreme difficulty. All the available wood was wedged and adjusted upon the ties and alongside the rails, and the locomotive, which was blowing off its accumulating steam, lashed and plunged, ran further off, then came nearer the iron, and then missed it again, until all were ready to give up in despair.

But the driver persisted with a patience that never faltered and he was finally rewarded by seeing every wheel in its true position again.

The train resumed its progress, and ten minutes later steamed into La Grange station.

(*To be continued.*

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A CONTRARY YOUNG WOMAN.

ON a cliff overhanging the city of Port Mahon, Minorca, is a plaza, called the "Alameda," where a few ilex trees afford a grateful shade. On one of the low stone benches many a pleasant hour may be dreamed away, watching the shadows chase each other over the swelling hills and meadows beyond. Now and again the soft wind wafts perfume from the almond blossoms which lie, like flakes of snow, on the bare fields stretching away to the blue water.

One evening, not long ago, a young girl was seated on the low wall, watching the sun sinking in the cloudless sky. The usual three-cornered mantilla draped her graceful head, and her long slender fingers toyed with the ends hanging over her shoulders. She represented one of the better class, with the intense southern beauty of the peasant idealised. Her black hair waved off a low forehead, guiltless of the pointed "frizz" which disfigures the face of those who ape the Parisian fashion. Her brows were heavy, and her dark eyes, riveted on the harbour below, seemed to reflect the sunset light. She was watching a large yacht, which, with all sails set, was gliding slowly, like some stately bird, to its anchorage.

The rattling of the anchor-chains roused her, and broke the long silence which she had so persistently maintained with her companion, a young man of Spanish type. A mixture of northern blood lightened his olive complexion and refined his sensuous southern features. His waist was circled by a red sash, and his work-worn hands twisted a bright-coloured turban, fashioned from a large handkerchief.

His passionate gaze contrasted strangely with the girl's indifference. "La Bella Jacquita" she was called, and well did she deserve her name! What was he that he should win her after all?

Jacquita looked up and smiled.

As when the sun, breaking through the clouds, bathes the fields in warmth and light, so did that smile transfigure the girl's fair face.

The distant church clock struck six. Rising, she drew the folds of her mantilla closer, and, lifting her eyes to his, said softly: "A Riverdel, Felipe!"

His gaze met hers; pride—anger—passion in his eyes. Mastering his excitement, he spoke: "Jacquita—be careful! I am not like those silly lads who come and go at a girl's nod. To-day I offered you my life, my heart! A man's dearest hopes and desires have I laid bare. How have you answered?"

He waited. Jacquita pushed the gravel petulantly with her foot, watching the pebbles fly, with a half-mocking smile on her lips. Again he spoke:

"I know you are 'La Bella of Mahon,' but I, too, have pride! Keep your scores of admirers, but know that from to-day there is one less—one man more is nothing in the tale of your conquests. You are 'La Bella,' and the man who makes you love him must needs be more than human—stronger than Felipe. Never again will I be ridiculed, mocked as I have been to-day!"

Jacquita trembled slightly, but still smiled. She waited, then looking up, she said, "Felipe, I am sorry——" but Felipe had gone!

That night Jacquita wept—with fear, excitement, and the triumph of having brought Felipe so low as to beg her as he had done that evening. "He will return," thought she. "They always do!"

Next day the party from the yacht made the tour of the town. A little boy of about six years of age was the life and centre of interest of the group. Clad in a sailor suit, his golden curls waving under his white cap, he formed a strong contrast to the dark-skinned children who stared as he passed them by. A pretty blonde girl followed with an elderly gentleman, and as she went along, Jacquita, seeing her exquisite fairness, thought: "The angels must look like that!"

All that day Felipe came not, and the speech of gentle reproof which Jacquita had prepared was not delivered. She began to wonder whether she had better accept him. The fun would then be over, but—supposing the other thing! Life would be as nothing with Felipe left out!

Evening came and found Jacquita and her mother seated at their door, conversing with the neighbours leaning out of the windows or strolling past. The "summer-winter" lingered late that year.

A group gathered—among them Francesca, the rival beauty. She was larger in every way than Jacquita. To many she was more attractive—being less chary of her brilliant smiles and jests.

"Hast heard the news?" she was saying. "As the 'Inglesi' were walking back to the yacht this afternoon, down on the quay, the little boy, catching sight of a large dog ahead, ran after him along the edge of the water. Suddenly, 'Ah, Santissima Maria!' he cried out—and then the water closed over him! Felipe was there and jumped in after him. There was no danger," she added, glancing maliciously at Jacquita's pale face; "and in a moment he was being embraced by the pretty young lady.

"But, Felipe!—Milord overwhelmed him with thanks, offered him money which the silly refused, and finally asked if he knew the sea and would care to come with him as a sailor. For a moment Felipe hesitated. But——" (and here the bright look on Jacquita's face faded)—"he finally said, 'Yes, Milord,' and so he goes to-morrow! Ah, but he is a brave lad that Felipe, and a lucky one! Some of us will care; but to those who have no hearts"—(and here she glanced coldly at the girl sitting silent beside her)—"to those it will make no difference."

Just then Felipe himself sauntered up. There was a difference between this nonchalant young sailor, bearing his honours so lightly, and the passionate lover of the night before. "Good luck, Felipe!" someone called; and Francesca, again the spokeswoman, cried: "Your fame has flown before you, and your good fortune makes us envious."

Felipe turned to Jacquita. She was talking animatedly to a young fellow beside her—seemingly oblivious of all else Felipe's face darkened; then, laughing, he turned, saying: "Come, friends, let us have a merry time on this, our last night, together. Come, drink my health and prosperity with me."

"Si! Si!" they answered.

Jacquita alone declined. She was "too tired," she said haughtily. Francesca, shrugging her shoulders, murmured: "One of her ugly moods! Santissima—what a temper!"

Jacquita listened to the retreating footsteps, and her downcast eye filled with tears—why, she would not own to herself. A quick step sounded, a voice said, "Jacquita!" Something—false pride, perhaps, or fear lest Felipe should see her weeping, held down her eyes—but she smiled.

"Thou didst not say 'Addio,' or even a lucky wish, Jacquita!"

Silence,—then a few smothered words broke from his lips, and ere she could frame the words of farewell still lingering on her tongue, she heard him striding down the street. As he turned the corner, snatches of a waltz—one of Francesca's favourites—came floating back to her. Early the next morning, while the Alameda yet lay wrapped in sleep, a girl leaned over the sea-wall, gazing with burning eyes at the beautiful boat below. The bustle of departure reached her straining ear, and she saw a rowing-boat speed out to the ship. A cheer rose from those on shore as, with a final pull, the anchor was hauled aboard. The broad sails filled slowly, and she slipped away as silently as she had come—away into the purple mists of the morning—away, and bearing with her a whole life's grief and disappointment.

"'La Bella Jacquita' is going daft," cried Francesca as every night the girl walks to the Alameda, watching for a boat that never comes.

One evening she sat gazing at a "tramp" steamer just anchored. She recalled that other night—and the boat now so far away. Alas for the pride of "La Bella of Mahon!" The setting sun covered her with its golden light. Her dark eyes grew larger with unshed tears; then a voice said softly, "I have come back to see if thou wilt yet say 'Addio,' mia Jacquita!"

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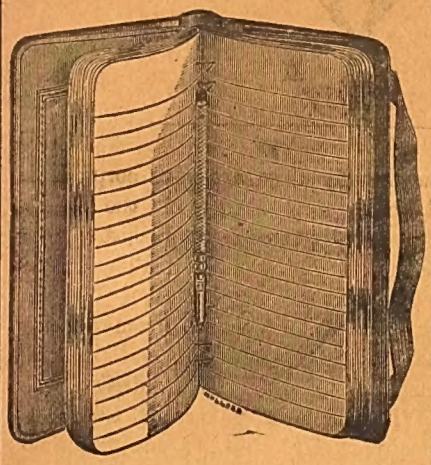

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